



King County

Community Services Division

Department of Community and Human Services

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Veteran Citizens Levy Oversight Board (VCLOB) Meeting Summary

January 16, 2014, 10am–12pm
Capitol Hill Library, Seattle, WA

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Francisco Ivarra at 10:05am.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Stan Gunno, Francisco Ivarra-Chair, Kathy Lewis, Mary Kay Lewis, John Pruitt, Robert Stephens, Jr., Curtis Thompson, Ray Tomlinson

Board Members Excused/Absent: Doug Hoople, Bill Wood

King County Staff Present: Chelsea Baylen, Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD); Joel Estey, Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS); Jon Hoskins (DCHS); Marcy Kubbs, DCHS; Andrea LaFazia-Geraghty, MHCADSD; Pat Lemus, DCHS; Laird Redway, DCHS; Linda Wells, DCHS

Guests: Dixon McReynolds III, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), Scott Swaim, Valley Cities and Milspec; Adam Chromy, Northwest Justice Project (NJP); Michelle Miller, NJP; Steve Fredrickson, NJP; Dave Waggoner.

Review of Meeting Summary

The October 17, 2013 meeting summary was approved as written.

Regional Veterans Initiative (RVI) Update

Pat Lemus explained that interviews were being conducted for RVI Coordinator position. Seven individuals received initial interviews. The second round of interviews will take place Thursday, January 23. She also stated representatives from over twenty agencies participated in an RVI Outreach, Information and Referral group meeting.

Northwest Justice Project Update - Steve Fredrickson, Adam Chromy, Michelle Miller

Northwest Justice Project (NJP) is Washington's publicly funded legal aid program, partially funded by the Veterans and Human Services (VHS) Levy. The Levy was one of NJP's earliest supporters. Each year NJP provides critical civil legal assistance and representation to thousands of low-income people in cases affecting basic human needs such as family safety and security, housing preservation, protection of income, access to healthcare, education and other basic needs. Levy funding provides low-income veterans in King County with help addressing the civil legal problems that prevent them



from securing jobs, finding and keeping affordable housing and ensuring they receive needed medical care and other benefits.

In addition, NJP's Veterans Project provides advice and representation on discharge upgrade issues for low-income veterans though Veterans Levy funds are not used for this work. They have private attorneys who are available to provide free consultation and representation on these discharge upgrade cases. Mr. Fredrickson explained that each military branch has its own Discharge Review Board (DRB) and Board for Correction of Military Records (BCMR) that considers these requests. Marine discharge upgrades are handled by the Navy. Discharge upgrade work may include upgrading less than honorable discharges and changing the reason for discharge on the DD-214. There are statutes of limitation and time limits for seeking relief from either the DRB or BCMR. The VA may also make some VA benefits such as health care available to otherwise ineligible veterans through an administrative process.

Three attorneys from NJP - Adam Chromy, Michelle Miller and Steve Fredrickson, attended the board meeting and provided board members with information and client stories that illustrated the breadth of services NJP attorneys provide.

Discussion

Veterans reach NJP through referrals from Vets Centers, County Veterans Consortium meetings, housing and services providers, and word of mouth. In addition, the connection with the Veterans Treatment Court is growing.

NJP is very interested in the work of the RVI and offered their support.

"Out Source", an organization in New York, provides pro bono work to veterans specific to changing negative discharge status' based on sexual preference.

Activity Update and Military Sexual Trauma RFP Awards announced: Levy Strategy 1.4

In the 2012-2017 Service Improvement Plan (SIP), language was included for Strategy 1.4 that stated because MST is a leading cause of PTSD among women veterans, a workgroup should be convened to explore the needs and design a service response as appropriate. As a result, in 2013 a workgroup was convened to identify the service needs of King County residents who are survivors of MST and issue a report. The report: "Status of Services in King County for Military Sexual Trauma Survivors: Findings, Gaps and Recommendations" was finalized in October 2013. The report noted that there is a lack of knowledge of the benefits and services available for survivors of MST by employers and service providers who have contact with survivors of MST. In addition, the report noted that the staff of non-veteran organizations may not be familiar with the military culture and/or the potential effects of MST, both of which can create misunderstandings or misperceptions of behaviors or actions of the survivors. With this information, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued requesting MST specific training to service providers and staff of agencies and organizations who work with or could work with survivors of MST; and MST specific benefits training to Veteran Service Officers so that they are better able to help the survivors apply for and receive benefits and services for which they are eligible.

Linda Wells, King County Program Manager for Levy Strategy 1.4 A & B Contracted Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Treatment/ Military Sexual Trauma, and Mary Kay Lewis, VCLOB member and recent Request for Proposal (RFP) review panel member, brought RFP award information to the VCLOB. The WDVA was awarded \$90,480 in Veterans Levy funds to develop a MST-specific training curriculum to be used to train non-Veteran focused organizations. Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation was

awarded \$83,520 to develop a MST-Specific Training curriculum to be used for training veteran-focused agencies on benefits for survivors of MST.

Discussion

- Field testing of the curriculum is required to ensure its success.
- Robert Stephens, Jr. provided several pages of ideas related to the MST work, to include in the record.

Chair's Report

- Francisco Ivarra appreciated the opportunity to participate on the RVI Coordinator interview panel.

Board Leadership

- Board members unanimously selected Francisco Ivarra as the Chair for the VCLOB.
- Board members unanimously selected Curtis Thompson as the Vice-chair for the VCLOB.

King County Staff Report

- The new Veterans Center in Auburn is underway.
- There may be an additional VCLOB meeting in February to discuss the Levy veterans' eligibility criteria. Board members agreed that Wednesday, February 5 would work for them. (Staff Note: The potential February VCLOB meeting was cancelled.)
- Jon Hoskins, Performance Management and Evaluation Unit Manager, provided an update on the Levy Mid-year Report performance data. He also provided board members with the 2014 Activity Level Evaluation Templates that guide the work of all Levy funded programs.

Discussion

- The performance measure targets are based on prior year's performance and the provider's capacity to serve.
- All Levy funded programs have data on the number of veterans served.
- One RVI goal is to consider standardizing intake forms across the County.

Old Business

- Robert Stephens, Jr. is looking for data from board members on what benefits they think would be appropriate to ask for from the City of Seattle; for example, a public utility discount for veterans.
- Curtis Thompson mentioned that a curriculum is being developed to help train employers to understand and value their veteran employee. The project has been extended into next year.
- Stan Gunno has agreed to stay with the board until his position is filled. He met his term limit at the end of 2013.
- Stan Gunno is working with Macy's Department Store on veterans preference hiring.

New Business

- At the December 2013 Joint Board meeting, establishing a committee to review performance management and fiscal issues was discussed. Each board was asked to provide representatives to

serve on the joint committee. Curtis Thompson and Mary Kay Lewis volunteered to serve on behalf of the VCLOB.

Future Agenda Items

- At a previous meeting Curtis suggested the Board explore the possibility of providing a veteran's preference when evaluating proposals submitted as part of competitive process. Also, could King County subcontractors providing veteran's services be asked to disclose how many veterans are employed to provide services to help ensure veterans are being served by veterans? Curtis wondered if staff could assist in the research.

Public Comment

- Robert Stephens wants Kathy Lewis, VCLOB member, to thank her husband, former Mayor of Auburn, Pete Lewis, for his great service on behalf of veterans. Former Auburn Mayor Pete Lewis will be speaking on veterans issues at the upcoming Mayor's conference.
- The Redmond Together Center will be housing a Veteran of Foreign War (VFW) representative on a weekly basis to provide veterans services information. The Federal Building in downtown Seattle is working on a similar arrangement to provide veterans services to homeless veterans.
- Dixon McReynolds, WDVA program manager for King County, will serve as a panelist at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. to discuss the resources available to veterans.
- Stan Gunno encouraged veteran gay/lesbian married couples to register their spouse with the Veterans Administration (VA) in order to receive benefits.
- Metro bus service to the VA Hospital will be reduced which poses a problem for many disabled veterans. Robert Stephens wanted to bring this issue to the Board's attention.
- Scott Swaim, Milspec will be changing jobs and moving to Washington, D.C. to serve as the Veterans Court National Liaison. He was thanked for his service to veterans in our community.

Adjournment

Francisco Ivarra thanked board members for their vote of confidence and looks forward to the work the board will conduct in the coming year.

The meeting was adjourned at 12 pm.